



WOODCOOKIE

a newsletter from Friends of Outdoor School



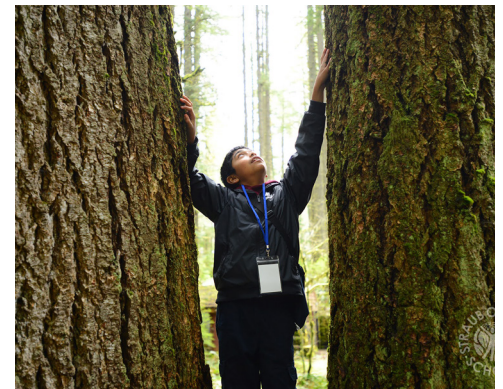
After a tentative return to in-person outdoor learning last fall, students returned this spring in earnest to Outdoor School across Oregon. Some spent the night, while most enjoyed extended days at parks, camps, and natural areas. School district and Outdoor School staff had to work through a myriad logistical challenges, including a shortage of bus drivers and an April snowstorm. Educators provided a lot of support to students expressing big emotions after the disruptions and trauma of the pandemic. Seeing and hearing the joy of kids learning outdoors with their friends made it clear that the effort was worth it!



Grants Pass 5th graders spent two nights and three days investigating Southern Oregon ecology and enjoying recreation, campfires, and meals together at **Rogue Outdoor School**.



The educators at **OMSI's Hancock Field Station** were excited to have students return for a season of overnight Outdoor School programs in Oregon's John Day country.



Students from Salem met **Straub Outdoors** educators at state parks for consecutive days, studying fir forests, oak savannas, and camas prairies in a bilingual Outdoor School program.



Sixth graders at **Sunny Wolf Charter School** in Josephine County stayed in yurts on the southern Oregon coast for the week. They studied tidepools, estuaries, and coastal geography while learning about careers in the outdoors.



The **Salem-Keizer Outdoor School Coalition** brought natural resource professionals together with 5th graders for three days at three separate locations in the Willamette Valley, including this spot at The Oregon Garden.



Portland Audubon Society hosted students for overnight Outdoor School at their Marmot location. Kids slept in yurts and studied the ecology and people of the Sandy River watershed.



Building the Capacity of the Outdoor School System

Our shared vision is that Outdoor School is a place where every child can belong. We work toward that vision through reflection: Does learning center students' cultures, identities, and lived experiences? Are diverse perspectives informing program and site improvements? Is Outdoor School an uplifting and affirming place to work? Does every family in a school community have trust and confidence to send their child to Outdoor School? Are educators prepared to support students' emotional, physical, social, and intellectual needs?

These are challenging questions, and critical ones. But what is the role of Friends of Outdoor School, given that we don't actually provide Outdoor School programming? Our work across the state with the Outdoor School Network has made it clear that Friends of Outdoor School is needed to connect Outdoor School providers and sites with each other; support the collaborative and independent work of this network to deliver on the promise of Outdoor School for all; and to advocate for the resources necessary to achieve that goal.

This also means that we are in the business of systems change. We envision Outdoor School as an ecosystem. Energy flows through the system, promoting growth, resilience, adaptation, and abundance. Actions are reciprocal and cyclical. Relationships are collaborative and supportive.

We see these qualities in the Outdoor School Network. Educators come together to share ideas and resources. Programs work to share staff and curriculum, to seek feedback and advice. In particular, folks are engaging in the deep, reflective work of equity, diversity, accessibility, and inclusion. This work requires vulnerability, flexibility, and trust.

The soil trusts the leaves to fall and decompose. The tree trusts the sun to shine. The Outdoor School ecosystem is growing on the foundation of trust. We are committed to supporting this ecosystem with stable funding that is as trustworthy as sunlight. By connecting the people in the Outdoor School Network together to create welcoming, inclusive learning experiences, we can achieve our vision.



Why Advocacy Matters

Political advocacy is one way we express our values and visions for our communities, and turn them into reality. Friends of Outdoor School advocates so people's voices are heard on issues related to Outdoor School.

Our early advocacy work secured funding for every student in Oregon to access Outdoor School. Since Measure 99 was not a constitutional amendment, we must continue to advocate for full funding. Achieving our collective vision requires stable, appropriate state funding.

We do this work by sharing your Outdoor School stories with legislators and continually educating decision-makers about Outdoor School around the state. In 2020, we met with legislators to explain how schools, sites, and programs were responding to the pandemic. In 2021, we met with legislative leaders to support policy that can improve access and inclusion at Outdoor School. Moving forward, we will begin tours for legislators to see Outdoor School in action.

Legislators value hearing from you. Share your story at: bit.ly/3O1PPr1



Welcome to the board, Gary!

Please join us in welcoming our newest board member, Gary Taylor! Gary is the Associate Executive Director of the Rogue Valley Family YMCA in Medford, Oregon. He will tell you himself that Outdoor School shifted and steered his life trajectory.

Born and raised in Oregon, Gary attended Outdoor School as a sixth grader at the Eagle Fern site and returned to be a 9-time high school student leader at the Namanu site. It was during his time as a high school student leader that he realized he wanted to work with youth in a camp setting professionally. Since then, he has served in every role the camp world offers, including the cook and camp director. In his current role, he is overseeing the development of a former rural school into an Outdoor Education Center to host Outdoor School in Southern Oregon.

He has enjoyed watching his own children start to become the leaders of tomorrow as they volunteer and work in all levels of Outdoor School. Only two of his six children have been able to experience Outdoor School as a student, inspiring him to be a part of this board.



New Principal of NWOSS

Northwest Outdoor Science School, the Outdoor School program within Northwest Regional Education Service District, recently announced their new principal Akari Jensen! Akari has taught kindergarten, second, and fourth grade throughout the Portland metro area. She also spent time as the program manager at Tsuga Community Commission where she developed programming for camps, fostered relationships, managed finances, and grew Tsuga's reputation. We're looking forward to working with Akari and seeing how she brings her unique skill set to this amazing program!

Double Your Impact

Did you know that your employer might match your donation to Friends of Outdoor School? We have a handy tool where you can check to see if your employer will match your gift! Just go to the link below and search for your employer to see if they will match your donation and by how much. Some employers even match donations of retired employees!

<https://bit.ly/3tcar8c>



Rest in Peace Diane

It is with grief that we share the loss of a dynamic force in the Outdoor School Community. Diane Millemann passed away on March 18, 2022. As the director of Multnomah County Outdoor School for many years, Diane was brilliant at sharing stories to illustrate the importance of Outdoor School for students. We will miss your passion, Diane. To share your story of Diane, visit <https://bit.ly/3MhRUOm>

There's still time to use your Target Circle votes to support Friends of Outdoor School. All you have to do is go into your Target app, click on My Target in the bottom right corner, make sure your store is marked as any of the Portland area stores, click on the box with the Target logo that says circle, click on the number of votes next to "Vote for nonprofits", and click the "Vote" button next to Friends of Outdoor School! The more votes we get, the more money Target donates to Friends of Outdoor School!



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Big thanks to everyone who participated in Earth Month festivities!



We are so grateful for you and the incredible Outdoor School community who spent this Earth Month hiking with friends around the state, connecting with new business partners, learning from one another, supporting our work at Friends of Outdoor School, and hopefully enjoying lots of time outside! Check out these photos from our friends Tyler and Crosby at Grand Union Real Estate during their Earth Day hike!



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